
Opening Remarks: Introduction, Objectives, and Overview

Mr. Samuel P. Williamson
Federal Coordinator

Mr. Samuel Williamson, Federal Coordinator for Meteorology, opened the Second Weather Information for Surface Transportation Symposium by welcoming the attendees. Prior to addressing administrative and logistical remarks, Mr. Williamson acknowledged the key support provided by the symposium's co-sponsor—Federal Highway Administration, United States Department of Transportation. He also extended his appreciation to: (1) the Interdepartmental Committee for Meteorological Services and Supporting Research (ICMSSR), (2) the Joint Action Group for Weather Information for Surface Transportation (JAG/WIST), and, in particular, (3) the invited panelists and presenters, moderators, rapporteurs, and symposium planners.

Mr. Williamson called attention to the symposium's theme "*Preparing for the Future: Improved Weather Information for Decision Makers*" and affirmed the theme was appropriate and timely because of the number of issues facing the Nation's public and private surface transportation community. Next, he summarized the past events and milestones associated with OFCM's involvement in weather support for surface transportation. These events included: (1) the Volpe Center Symposium; (2) ICMSSR's directive to form a JAG/WIST; (3) First WIST Symposium; (4) data gathering via surveys, interviews, and questionnaires; and (5) data analysis. To close his summary on past activities, Mr. Williamson discussed the actions taken by OFCM in response to the six action items identified at the close of the First WIST Symposium. The action items were:

- ◆ Obtain complete questionnaires from 1999 Symposium participants - Continuing - information being incorporated into templates for each transportation mode
- ◆ Publishing Proceedings by February 2000 - Completed
- ◆ JAG/WIST input to Requirements Document- Completed
- ◆ Distribute draft Requirements Document by May/June 2000 - Revised-validation of templates proceeding
- ◆ Publish Requirement Document by Summer 2000 - Pushed back until June 2001 to enable validation of templates
- ◆ WIST Symposium in Fall 2000 - Completed

To refocus attention onto the purpose for the WIST II Symposium, Mr. Williamson raised the following facts to support "*Why We Are Here?*"

- ❖ United States transportation system consists of 3.9 million miles of public roads; 2 million miles of oil and natural gas pipelines; 120 thousand miles of major railroads, and over 25 thousand miles of commercially navigable waterways.
- ❖ Roadway accidents are influenced by a wide variety of factors such as geometrics, **WEATHER**, and driver behavior.

- ❖ Boating-related fatalities rank second only to car crashes as the cause of transportation-related deaths in the United States; 6 percent of 1998 boating accidents listed WEATHER as a contributing factor.
- ❖ In 1996, households spent, on average, about 17 percent of their total expenditures on transportation.
- ❖ A goal outlined in the United States Department of Transportation Strategic Plan for 2000-2005 states: “Develop a National Intelligent Transportation Infrastructure Architecture that includes **ALL** information needs of transportation including **WEATHER** information.”
- ❖ The United States Maritime Transportation System projects the total volume of domestic and international marine trade to more than double over the next 20 years.
- ❖ The National Science and Technology Council estimates the congestion costs to motorists to be \$51 billion per year.
- ❖ The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, for the period 1997-1999, reports (1) over 12 percent of the fatal crashes occurred during inclement weather, (2) an average of 114 persons died daily in crashes—1 every 13 minutes, and (3) the total societal cost of crashes exceeded \$150 billion annually.
- ❖ The meteorological community has made significant progress in: (1) defining federal requirements for weather information for surface transportation; (2) improved computational power and numerical models; (3) enhanced visualization techniques; and (4) high-speed communications.

Before reviewing the agenda, Mr. Williamson outlined the objectives for the Second WIST Symposium.

- ❖ Provide status of needs and requirements analysis
- ❖ Provide update/summarize progress and activities over the last 12 months
- ❖ Identify initiatives/programs that are currently underway or being planned
- ❖ Illuminate gaps where additional focus is required
- ❖ Identify next steps/actions toward improving weather information for decision-makers

In closing, Mr. Williamson reminded the attendees that the presentations and other materials would be available on the OFCM website shortly after the conclusion of the forum.

[Link to Presentation:](#)

www.ofcm.gov/WistII/Presentations/Day1/1_FC_Intro_Obj/FCWelcome_Intro_Obj_wistII.ppt